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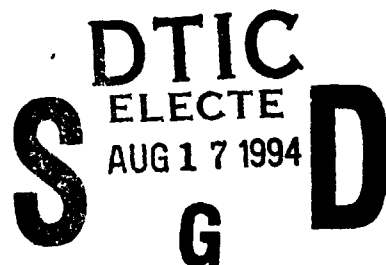
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**MEDIA AS A FORCE ENHANCER:  
THE OPERATIONAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

By

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## Abstract of

### Media as a Force Enhancer: The Operational Planning Considerations

If properly understood and integrated into operational planning, media presence can be a legitimate and powerful force enhancer in military operations. This paper is directed at operational planners and commanders to help them fully comprehend both the obvious and the subtle impacts the media has on their planning efforts. The keys to effectively capitalizing on the media presence are to incorporate the limitations imposed and exploit the opportunities presented. To that end, this paper starts by reviewing the evolution of media on the battlefield, with a focus on the problems noted, the lessons learned, the continuing struggle over access, and the increasing reporting capabilities enabled through technological advances -- all things operational planners need to understand. The heart of the paper is in the discussion of how the media impacts at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war, and the resulting implications on, and planning considerations for, operational planners. Specific examples highlight how the media was used effectively and ineffectively by both sides in Operation Desert Storm. The bottom line underscores how operational planning can make the media a positive influence in the outcome of a war.

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## PREFACE

The topic of media and the military has received considerable debate over the years, as the media's influence in the modern world is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in warfare. Literally rooms of books, reports, research papers, and articles, as well as countless "military-media" conferences, have been devoted to military-media relations and the management of media in military operations. To me, what's far more pressing at this point, is for military commanders to just face the fact that media will always be there, with improved technical capability, pressing for more and more access. Instead, commanders should turn their attention to making the most of the media's presence -- that's a real and complex issue in itself. Unfortunately, very little is written on it, as too many simply dismiss the concept as "manipulation" of the media -- ala Vietnam. The truth is there are legitimate ways to use the media, capitalizing on the impact of their presence. The vitally important role the media plays in our military operations demands operational planners recognize both the limitations and potential value the media brings. It's a subject worthy of further exploration and more scholarly research, as this is just a start.

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# **MEDIA AS A FORCE ENHANCER: THE OPERATIONAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

**"The media impact on operational commanders today is more significant than any other time in the history of warfare." An overstatement? Not a chance! Remarkable leaps in information technology, heightened levels of public interest, and unprecedented media demand for full, instant access have revolutionized the role of media in military campaigns. Consider Operation Desert Storm: over 1600 reporters, live on-scene reporting, and graphic television coverage literally brought the Persian Gulf War into the living rooms of over one billion viewers in 108 countries around the world, including Iraq!<sup>1</sup> Or look at the more recent debacle in Somalia, where hoards of anxious reporters and cameramen swarmed Navy SEAL teams and the Marine amphibious landing troops as they "fought" their way ashore, blinded by camera lights and hindered by interview requests. Operational commanders need to face the fact that media access in the battlefield is here to stay, and it's going to be more—not less—prevalent in future operations as information technology continues to skyrocket.**

**Few could disagree that the media's far-reaching effects touch virtually every facet of the military at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. At the strategic level, it's largely through the media, that public opinion is shaped. As a result, media influences directly affect key decisions involving foreign policy, when and where the U.S. intervenes militarily, fickle public support for military operations, and even force structure. At the operational level, the media plays an equally vital role in the conduct of war: it provides critical intelligence data and instantaneous feedback to both sides; it limits the ability to surprise; it continuously challenges operational security; it reduces decision time; and it demands rapid feedback and accountability for all field operations.**

At the tactical level, the major impacts are the increased logistics involved in physically accommodating the growing number of media and managing the direct interface between individual military members and the press. Every one of these effects impact and are influenced, at least to a degree, by operational planning.

The problem faced today is twofold. First, the media's capability to report from the battlefield has surpassed the military's ability to effectively manage the process. Second, the impact of the media on the battlefield is not always understood and fully integrated at the operational level. While volumes of have been written on the military/media interface, traditional approaches focus exclusively on the first problem, managing the relations and media logistics. Unfortunately, that's only part of the answer as report after report concludes "we've got to work better together." The second problem, though critically important, has received considerably less attention. I propose that, if properly understood and integrated at the operational level, the media can actually be a force multiplier to enhance future military operations. For the operational commander it means understanding the limitations imposed and exploiting the opportunities provided by the media presence. Therefore, attention should be focused not just on how to manage media relations but also on how the media shapes the prosecution of modern warfare. That's the issue I want to address in this paper.

I intentionally avoid discussion regarding the endless debate over the first amendment rights of the free press versus the right of the military to safeguard and control information. Suffice it to say that the adversary relationship is traditional and healthy as the two bodies are diametrically opposed in objective. Similarly, I avoid detailed discussion over the alternatives for managing the numbers of media in the field. Instead, I limited the scope of this paper by making the rather general assumptions that large-scale media presence will be a part of future military operations and vast amounts of information will be made public, in the normal course of their job.

In the first section of this paper, I'll review the evolution of media's impact on the battlefield and how we got to the point we are at today. Emphasis is on the technological developments, the lessons learned in past conflicts, and how the current rules were developed. Subsequent chapters focus on the specific impact the media makes in modern warfare at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels, and how those media impacts influence the operational planner. I'll conclude by recapping specific operational planning considerations and recommendations.



## CHAPTER II

### EVOLUTION OF THE MEDIA ON THE BATTLEFIELD

More than 2500 years ago, Sun Tzu, in emphasizing the extreme importance of intelligence and deception in the outcome of the battle, wrote of the critical need for the military commander to maintain total "control" over all information.<sup>2</sup> That task was relatively straight forward into the early 1800s, as the media had no way to disseminate information quickly enough to be a factor in warfare. Our own American history generally discounts any day-to-day impact of the media in the conduct of the Revolutionary War, Battle of 1812, and even the Mexican-American War. It was in the 1850s when the use of the telegraph and the railroad systems transformed the ability of the media to rapidly disseminate information from the battlefield—timely enough that it forever added an important new dimension to warfare. The influence of print media was immediately apparent in the Civil War, where reports about "the media acting as expeditious messengers of intelligence" were rampant, and the North was burned repeatedly as "battles were lost, as well as soldiers' lives, thanks at least in part to advance word that reached Confederate commanders via the press."<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter, I want to walk through the major conflicts that occurred since media first became a player in conflict and point out the role the media has played in each case. In particular, I ask the reader to focus on two areas: technological capability and access. As for technology, trace the speed, the capability for increasingly graphic war coverage, and the capability to reach progressively larger audiences. In terms of access, note how various policies to control the reporting have changed in an effort to support greater battlefield access while still protecting the mission and troops. Understanding this dynamic evolution is the first critical step operational planners must take to fully appreciate media's enormous impact and role in future conflict, as well as to help avoid the pitfalls of the past.

*From the World Wars to Operation Urgent Fury*

*Advances in Technology and A Widening Rift in Relations*

Technological advances and the maturity of the media continued to play significant roles in the world wars, where national leaders counted extensively on the media to help build and sustain public support. Interestingly, censorship was never a factor in World War I, largely because the press believed the cause to be just, and the cooperation with the military was strong. Additionally, correspondents had no choice but to cooperate as they counted on the military to get their printed media reports filed. In the second world war, the advent of electronic broadcast gave the media the ability to broadcast live via radio. In doing so, it provided not only an all new sense of autonomy, but also an unprecedented ability to reach mass audiences--public and military--on both sides. Though the military imposed strict and formal censorship, the media voluntarily complied, working closely with the military throughout the war effort.

The Korean War was when the mutual cooperation and media's voluntary support of previously established guidelines started to crumble. In the much more controversial war effort, the media coverage raised questions in the American public's mind. In the field, correspondents quickly came to odds with the military as complaints rang out over operational security breaches caused by media reporting. General MacArthur, though initially refusing to institute censorship rules, reluctantly reversed his position. The resulting censorship, the lack of security guidance, and fierce competition between reporters only exacerbated the problem. I'll point out also that, although there were episodes of flagrant irresponsibility by the media, some suggest "the erosion of public support had more to do with flawed government policy than it did with the media's ability to report on the ugly side of the war."<sup>4</sup>

The animosity between the military and the media peaked during Vietnam, as did the nightly color television coverage of the horrors of war. "The miracle of television...placed the stench, gore, and tragedy of the Vietnam War right in the laps of

the American people."<sup>5</sup> Challenged with dwindling public support, the military intensified their public affairs campaign specifically to drum up domestic support. Daily update briefings (dubbed the "Five O'Clock Follies" by critics) were filled with conflicting information and skewed, distorted military reports. In the end, the effort backfired as both the media and the public grew skeptical and the military's credibility to hit rock bottom. Mutual distrust dominated the military/media relationship, as the military increasingly blamed the media for sensationalizing the ugliness and discontent; the media hammered the military for withholding public information and outright misleading the American public. Unfortunately nothing was resolved in the years that followed, and the military's deep distrust of the media led to more troubles in Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada in 1983.

Operation Urgent Fury was a milestone in the evolution of media in conflict. Though the operation was relatively minor both in scale and duration, operational security was so tight that the media was totally excluded during the first few days and limited immediately thereafter. The initial reports, all originated by the military, were generally disbelieved by the media, who subsequently provided less than favorable coverage, which sometimes contradicted military accounts. In the end, the overall success of the operation was grossly overshadowed by the ground swell of criticism for the media blackout. More than anything else, Urgent Fury brought the issue of media access and censorship to the forefront, where it needed to be addressed.

#### *The Sidle Panel and Operation Just Cause*

In direct response to national criticism in Urgent Fury, the Joint Chiefs of Staff convened the Media-Military Relations Panel, commonly referred to as the Sidle Panel, after its chairman, MGen Winant Sidle. The specific charter of the panel was explore the rift in relations and to answer two questions: Did the media have the right to cover U.S. military operations; and, if so, how much access should they be given? The

publication of the Sidle Panel's report, issued 23 August 1983, was a watershed event in military/media relations. The results of the panel set the standard for media access in the battlefield and still forms the basis of media access we work with today.

The bottom line of the report was "the U.S. media should cover the U.S. military operations to the maximum degree possible consistent with mission security and safety of U.S. forces."<sup>6</sup> However, it still left the ultimate question of how much access up to the operational commander. More importantly, in its very first recommendation, the report institutionalized the public affairs role as an essential part of military operational planning, "to be conducted concurrently with operational planning." The second major recommendation was the creation of the national media pool process used to discreetly provide limited media presence in the critical early stages of conflict. Under the pool process, a small, selected group of media would be on call to cover the initial stages of combat operations until open coverage could be arranged. It was seen as a means of providing early access to media without jeopardizing operational security and safety of U.S. troops. Though neither the military nor the media were fully satisfied with the concept, it was accepted by each side as perhaps the best way to balance the media's desired access with the military's required mission control. The full recommendations of the Sidle Panel are at Appendix I.

The first combat test of the new pool concept came in December 1989 in Operation Just Cause in Panama -- it was a major failure! Despite relative success in practice exercises and the Persian Gulf Navy tanker escort operation in 1987, the first combat test was hallmarked by late activation and poor execution. Once again, military planners were widely criticized, and rightfully so. It was a classic example of media planning as an afterthought. A late departure from Washington D.C. caused the pool to not even arrive until the second day of the operation. Additionally, "inadequate transportation limited the movement of the press; access to combat areas was restricted; senior officer support was half-hearted, and support personnel did not

respond to media needs."<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, even the decision to activate the national press pool is generally criticized since the situation did not meet the ground rules, as the press already in the area negated the need for the pool to even be exercised. As in Grenada, media criticism left the military with somewhat of a black eye.

### *The Hoffman Report and Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm*

#### *Success at Last*

In response to the media problems experienced in Panama, OSD once again examined what went wrong. The findings were embodied in what became known as the Hoffman Report, named for its chairman, Fred Hoffman, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs and a 23-year veteran of pentagon reporting. Essentially, the report called for more official sponsorship and support of the media pool, and emphasized, once again, the critical need for the public affairs planning in concert with operational planning. Report recommendations are at Appendix II. Those recommendations were put to the test in the Persian Gulf War.

By most DoD accounts, Operation Desert Shield was extremely successful in terms of media integration, but there were some problems in Desert Storm. The aggressive public affairs plan smartly incorporated the lessons learned in past conflicts and followed the related guidance to the letter. The national media pool system worked smoothly just as planned and was disbanded two weeks into the desert build up. Once the war started, the well-orchestrated and detailed daily press briefings provided excellent information for the whole world. Additionally, candid interviews with senior military leaders, the seeming high field-level cooperation between the military and the media, and the unprecedented press coverage received rave reviews by all but the media, with an overall approval rating of 83 percent by the American public.<sup>8</sup> (Interestingly, polls showed almost 90 percent of Americans supported some form of

media censorship under the circumstances). In light of the favorable reporting and optimum combat conditions, services clamored for the media spotlight to show off their personnel and equipment.

Eventually more than 1600 reporters joined in the media fray; as a result media pools of varying sizes had to be instituted to handle them. To coordinate the massive public affairs effort, the Joint Information Bureau, or JIB, was developed to oversee media movements and process media products. The media had only minimal security limitations in their reporting (i.e. no specific troop strengths, locations, etc.) and basically had free rein anywhere the JIB could get them. But that was the problem in itself, as the lack of access granted to reporters was the number one press complaint. Basically, they did not feel that the JIB process gave them free enough access to do their jobs. The issue wasn't as much security, as it was "censorship by access," based on the power of the military to control access to reporting. They likened the military's role as that of assignment editors telling them what they could or could not cover. Their second complaint was the required security review at the source and transmission process that delayed their reporting in some cases. Statistics show it was a valid concern -- less than 70 percent of the field pool reports filed even arrived at the JIB in less than 2 days; some of them took several more days to make it to the states.<sup>9</sup> Problems were attributed to the lack of sufficient logistical support. The media complaints withstanding, Pete Williams, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, still called Desert Storm "the nation's best covered war."<sup>10</sup> Few could dispute it was the best example to date of U.S. media impact being planned and integrated into operational planning, and, in that regard, it was a welcome success. However, it's also obvious that problems were not all resolved and future military operations will still need to manage the media access and procedural reporting concerns raised by the media.

### *The Current Rules*

The current rules governing the integration of media in combat operations is a combination of the Sidle Panel results, the Hoffman findings, and Desert Storm and Restore Hope feedback. DoD Directive 5122.5 sets forth the "Principles of Information" and provides the most current Department of Defense Policy guidance regarding access and the general release of military information. It is included as Appendix III. In 1992, the Defense Department also adopted nine principles, developed in conjunction with leaders in the media industry, for specific battlefield media coverage of U.S. military combat operations. Called the "Statement of DoD Principles For News Media Coverage of DoD Operations," this document is also included as Appendix IV. The last enclosure, Appendix V, is the list of Desert Storm Ground Rules detailing items which could not be reported for threat of jeopardizing the mission or safety of troops.<sup>11</sup>

I summarized the key concepts from all the documents below. Operational commanders should be familiar with these basic concepts.

- Media coverage should be allowed to the maximum extent possible without jeopardizing mission security and the safety of U.S. forces.
- Public affairs must be an integral part of the operational planning process.
- Open, independent reporting is encouraged and supported. Access restrictions will be at the absolute minimum.
- Military support should be provided for the media, to include logistics, transportation, and communication facilities where feasible.
- Media personnel should be treated as members of the unit. They should be dispersed throughout the combat area to offer as wide coverage as possible.
- Reporters will be credentialed by the military and reporters should voluntarily follow security guidelines. Breaches in security will cost them their credentials.
- The National Pool System will be used if needed in the initial stages of conflict, but it does not replace the need for open reporting as soon as possible.

### *What's Next ?*

At this point, I want to recap emerging trends and look to the future as they affect military planners. First, technology is making the media impact an increasingly more important part of conflict. "Technological advances have now liberated the media from the grasp of the military and made the media a greater threat to operational security than ever before." The potential is already present for the media to circumvent the military's access controls. What's more, future technology promises to further enhance the capability. For example, Motorola's new satellite-based global telephone system will be operational by 1996. That will "enable print and radio correspondents to file stories from any location where facilities may not exist or give journalists the ability to bypass local telephone networks that may be controlled or monitored."<sup>12</sup> Stephen Aubin, Deputy Director of the Center for Defense Journalism at Boston, points out, "In some future conflict, there is no certainty that the military will be able to effectively constrain the media."<sup>13</sup> By in large, the media cooperated with the military in Desert Storm, but while it's great to have the media coverage when the war is as one-sided as Desert Storm, we can't count on that next time. What if Desert Storm turned in to the long and protracted "mother of all wars" Saddam Hussein promised? What would that do to the working relationship and its effect on public support?

Second, the number of reporters in the battlefield has grown to nearly uncontrollable levels. The few hundred reporters in the world wars grew to over 400 in Vietnam, 900 in Panama, and 1600 in Desert Storm. The logistic concern for the operational commander should be obvious as more press requires more complex support planning and resources as well as concern over the number of "strap hangers" in the field.

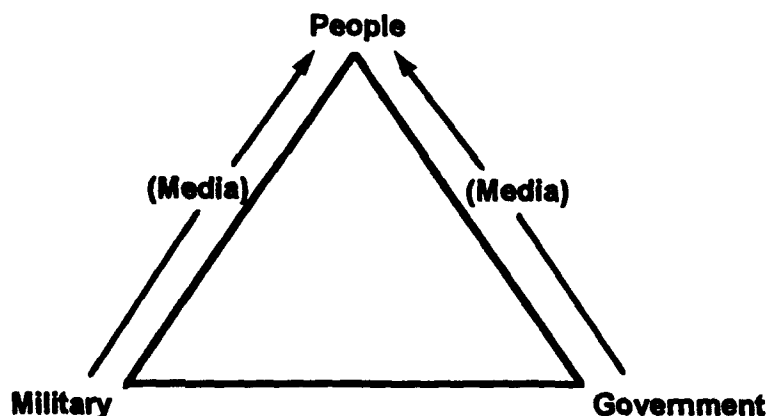


### CHAPTER III

## OPERATIONAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS FOR INCORPORATING THE IMPACT OF MEDIA AT THE STRATEGIC LEVEL

Now, with the technology and the current rules understood, I'll turn my attention to the myriad ways the media affects operational planners at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. It's imperative that planners fully comprehend how their planning affects the media as well as how the media impact influences them at all three levels of warfare, starting in this chapter, with the impacts at the strategic level.

Traditionally the strategic impact of battlefield media has received considerable attention, as it directly shapes public opinion by its reporting content and style. Strategists, statesmen, and commanders alike have long recognized the key role the public plays in national security. In the 18th century, Carl Von Clausewitz described the inextricable link between the military, the public, and the government as the "trinity," citing the strategic desire to keep them in sync with one another. The 20th century media has added a new dimension to the trinity since it is now through the media "filter" that the vast majority of information reaches the public. That's particularly true of the links between the people and the military, and the people and the government. In essence, I suggest what has materialized is a new look at the Clausewitzian trinity as shown. The result not only underscores the importance of media in conflict; it also demands media coverage if public support is to be sustained. In that regard, the military needs the media, as the media is the military's primary conduit to the public.



One of the roles of operational planners is to facilitate the media to ensure what the public sees is an accurate portrayal. In the previous model, it means the filter must be kept clear and unimpeded to maintain an accurate flow of information. Charles Ricks, in his report, "The Military-News Media Relationship: Thinking Ahead," explains, "The commander's operational task is to develop a well-resourced and responsive infrastructure to conduct news media relations. Failure to do so will not affect the scale of news media coverage; it will, however, limit the commander's ability to communicate effectively and risk distorting the public's perception of the military's effectiveness."<sup>14</sup> Colonel John Shotwell, in the Marine Corps Gazette, also stressed how similar thinking guided the public affairs themes that existed throughout the Gulf War.<sup>15</sup>

- Public support is vital to the success of the operation.
- We gain and maintain support by showing the public what [we] are accomplishing.
- The only way to show [soldiers] to the American public is through the news media.
- Public affairs should be incorporated into operational planning.

Likewise, General Colin Powell underscored the importance of the strategic value of the media by cautioning military commanders, "Once you've got the forces moving and everything's being taken care of by the commanders...turn your attention to television because you can win the battle or lose the war if you don't handle the story right."<sup>16</sup>

What does all this mean for operational planners? It means every action planned must stand up to intense public scrutiny and help bolster public confidence. Public perception of the warfighting results needs to be a factor throughout the planning process. It impacts countless planning functions, including target selection, weapon selection, and collateral damage considerations, to name a few. In this era of precision weapons, irresponsible targeting, seemingly indiscriminate damage, or excessive collateral damage does not sit well with the public. Saddam Hussein and his well publicized propaganda campaign showed he was a master at utilizing the press to get to the American people; fortunately his execution was poor in most cases. For

example, think back to the horrifying footage produced from Baghdad showing extensive damage to urban areas and in one instance a purported "bomb shelter full of women and children," which was actually a command and control facility. In another instance, coalition bombing destroyed the facility in Baghdad, which Saddam Hussein claimed was a baby milk factory, but U.S. planners claimed was a chemical weapons plant. In those cases, Saddam Hussein also used the media as a conduit to the American people, trying to alter their perceptions. The point is the media naturally lends itself to abuse through propaganda. To operational planners, increased scrutiny and the potential for mistakes to be exploited by the other side, now demands target analysts to exercise an added degree of caution or restraint in the future. I suggest if the same facilities described above were destroyed in World War I, it would never have been questioned -- the difference now is the media capability which holds the military under more intense scrutiny and demands more public accountability.

Realizing the public distaste for U.S. casualties and the ability for public opinion to turn overnight also places an extra burden on planners to keep the war short and keep the risk of U.S. casualties at the absolute minimum. Though such advice may sound like a "given" to many, it does limit the planning options. For example, some have said one reason the amphibious landing in Kuwait was not conducted is because of the potential for high casualties. Perhaps, the same operation would have been attempted in World War I or II, if the benefits were worth the potential cost and the risk of immediate feedback to the American people was not so instantaneous and graphic. In this instance, the impact of the media essentially raised the potential cost of the landing to an unacceptable level.

Besides linking the military and the public, there is another important function of the media at the strategic level -- that of conveying diplomatic and military signals and intentions. In his article, "Desert Storm: War of Words and Images," RADM Baker points out countless occasions "television, and CNN in particular, has become the

medium of choice for diplomatic dialogue."<sup>17</sup> John Chancellor of NBC News also noted the importance of media as a medium by starting off his broadcast one even by proclaiming, "Saddam Hussein has found a new way to continue politics during war. He found CNN."<sup>18</sup> The point is in Desert Storm, the news medium was used extensively for communicating not only with Saddam Hussein, but with the rest of the world as well. There is no doubt the media played a crucial role in conveying U.S. resolve and readiness.

Another powerful effect of the media is its natural ability to magnify perceptions, which are the backbone of certain military operations such as "presence" and "show-of-force." This can be a powerful tool for the war planner if understood and used right. Not only can the media significantly enhance the effectiveness of "show-of-force" operations by reinforcing the perceptions being conveyed, but the lack of media coverage will certainly reduce the effectiveness of such operations as well. A second benefit of the media in "presence" operations is that effectiveness can take place over long distances. For example, consider the statement made by widespread media coverage of a carrier battle group deploying from their stateside port to a distant location. The perception that the force is enroute is a show of force in itself; no longer does the force necessarily need to be sitting off the coast to be effective. In essence, media has extended the "range" of gunboat diplomacy. It's just one more way the effect of the media is changing the way the military conducts business. Next, I'll turn my attention to the media impact at the operational level.

## CHAPTER IV

### OPERATIONAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS FOR INCORPORATING THE IMPACT OF MEDIA AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL

**"They encumber our troops, occupy our staterooms to the exclusion of officers on duty, they eat our provisions, they swell the crowds of hangers on, and increase the impedimenta. They publish without stint of positive information of movements past and prospective, organizations, names of commanders, accurate information which reaches the enemy with as much regularity as it does our people."**

**General William Sherman  
...on the media in the Civil War<sup>19</sup>**

It's ironic that the concerns raised by General Sherman in the first war impacted by the media have changed so little in over a century. Clearly, it's at the operational level of war that the media impact has made the most significant difference. In this chapter, I'll concentrate on the impact the media has made at the operational level, and show how it directly affects the planning process.

The vast amount of information provided through the media to both sides is the single greatest impact the media has made on the military. It has literally transformed the nature of warfare, as accurate, real-time feedback was passed right over the television in Operation Desert Storm. It also led Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney to admit how it's "increasingly difficult to sort out what we know from intelligence and what we know from CNN." In his book, How CNN Fought the War, Perry Smith, a retired general hired by CNN as a military analyst, highlighted the enormous role CNN played throughout Desert Storm, referring to the media as "not just innocent bystanders, but active participants used by both sides."<sup>20</sup>

For operational planners the volumes of information made available by the media take many different forms. The first form is information about themselves, some of which they would want to conceal as sensitive operational information, and other information could be allowed or even encouraged to be released. The key is in how the

information can be used and what the effect of its release might have. The second form is information on the enemy; it's information cautiously used for its potential intelligence value. I call the third form of information real-time mission feedback, i.e. damage assessment. The following paragraphs discuss each in turn.

One approach planners take regarding information about themselves is to safeguard it as mission-sensitive. This involves the principle of security, which is always a paramount concern as it can risk both mission and forces. No doubt, the increased media interface and capability has raised the threat to operational security to a new high, however it can still be managed. In the Gulf War, the media's voluntary restraint worked well thanks to a solid public affairs team, whose planning and execution gave the media no need to work outside the "established system." Throughout Desert Shield, the military kept the media inundated with timely, accurate information, and imposed relatively liberal reporting constraints. In Desert Storm, detailed briefings and pool field reporting kept information flowing, albeit selective and slow. That's a stark contrast to some previous conflicts where the media had to "fight" and bypass the military to get their stories out at all. The key is working with the media and actively managing the operational security risk.

The other approach planners may take regarding information about themselves is to support the release because either it has no major impact on them or it could enhance their efforts. Media can be a positive factor when the aim is to show resolve, readiness, or mission effectiveness. As in the Desert Storm daily mission briefings, it helps convey an important message to the American people, the rest of the world, and the enemy. In testifying before Congress, Walter Cronkite noted the intense pressure the live mission briefings created, and how "constrained" the briefers must be by knowing that they are briefing, among others, Saddam Hussein.<sup>21</sup> Hence, the media can carry and reinforce strong messages—and sometimes with questionable objectivity. For example, Perry Smith, the CNN war analyst, discussed how he hoped his detailed

analysis depicting how well the war was progressing and his repeated predictions about an early end "might help encourage Saddam Hussein to walk out of Kuwait with his military still largely intact."<sup>22</sup>

Planners may also encourage the release of information about themselves to support deception efforts. Like propaganda, deception involves the intent to influence perceptions, but it is aimed specifically at the enemy. What I am suggesting is for planners to readily exploit whatever advantage media presence provides — call it a target of opportunity created by the media. Here, I caution readers not to confuse this concept with manipulation of the media; there is a subtle but important distinction, as the military's credibility is at stake. The key is in the passive rather than active use of the media. Manipulation of the media in a deception or propaganda campaign would not only sever relationships, but it also would violate the most fundamental public affairs guidance and regulations. I merely advocate taking what they report into consideration to enhance operational planning. Of course the classic Desert Storm example is General Schwarzkopf's famous ground campaign. It prompted Perry Smith to write:

"We could count on Schwarzkopf's deceiving the enemy and the press; which in fact he did. By denying access to many of the ground combat areas prior to the onset of the ground combat, he was able to withhold from the press the fact that he had moved massive forces in position for the greatest single envelopment toward the north and the east. He never discouraged the interest of the media in the Marine amphibious operation...when, in fact, he had no intentions of conducting massive amphibious operations."<sup>23</sup>

General Schwarzkopf also expressed "delight" at how the media's extensive coverage of the initial Desert Shield troop buildup made it seem larger than it was. Reports show how the U.S. forces were actually much more vulnerable than Saddam probably believed. General Schwarzkopf didn't "manipulate" the media to over portray the buildup. The media did it on their own and he simply took advantage of it.

Captain Ellen Haddock wrote an excellent article in the Marine Corps Gazette, highlighting how well Saddam Hussein used the western media to actively promote his propaganda. For example, look at the way he used the media to intensify the effects of his Scud missile attacks. He kept the whole world on the edge of their seats with a relatively limited capability. "Seeing the live missiles streaking across the sky" and questioning whether they might contain chemical or biological weapons significantly magnified the fear and terror to people in potential target areas. Basically, it made the psychological effects of the attacks much greater than the actual capability.<sup>24</sup> These are the types of "passive" uses military planners need to consider.

Now I turn to the second form of information, data on the enemy. Planners need to examine all information for its legitimate intelligence value. Scores of good data was available in Desert Storm through open media coverage -- but along with it was a good deal of propaganda. An excellent example is prior to the war effort, when Saddam Hussein was able to use the media to reinforce grossly overestimated perceptions of his military might. In that regard, military analysts need to take the information for what it's worth and be wary of the source, especially if the media is under censorship as it was in Iraq. It's vitally important that military analysts be able to weed out, and if necessary, counter the propaganda. In dealing with propaganda, planners must have a structure in place to quickly counter propaganda events -- especially if the propaganda is aimed at U.S. or world public opinion. Again, the "baby milk factory" bombing was a good example of where U.S. planners had to act fast to crush the accusation with credible conflicting data. Possible options include the use of photography, positive intelligence data, and strike camera film.

The third form of information planners get via the media is real-time damage assessment, another by-product of the media's advanced capability to report live from virtually anywhere, including target areas. In Desert Storm, the whole world was captivated watching CNN reporters Bernard Shaw, John Holliman, and Peter Arnett



broadcast live from the Al-Rashid hotel in downtown Baghdad during fierce coalition bombings. For planners, it was a superb opportunity for instant feedback on the mission. Within seconds of impact, they could sometimes receive reports via CNN of what was hit and how much it was damaged.

What about the principle of surprise; how does the media presence affect it? At first glance, one might dismiss the principle of surprise, at least in the traditional sense. That's not necessarily warranted. Army Manual FM 100-5 discusses the impact of the media in operations as well as how it affects surprise. Though the likelihood of achieving complete surprise is reduced, in part due to the ever-present media (and partly due to high quality surveillance systems), the element of surprise is still very valid. The manual explains, "Surprise can still be achieved by operating in a manner the enemy does not expect...or through deceiving the enemy as to nature, timing, and force...and unexpected changes in tempo (as in the Desert Storm ground campaign)."<sup>25</sup> Therefore, planners need to understand how the principle of surprise is affected, but it's still very much alive. In fact, though the media limits the ability for complete surprise, it could help in other ways discussed above, to achieve surprise through deception. Again, Desert Storm proved it.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **OPERATIONAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE IMPACT OF MEDIA AT THE THEATER LEVEL**

Nowhere is the direct burden and headaches of the media felt more than at the theater level. That's where the rubber meets the road. In Desert Storm it meant more than 1600 reporters in January 1991, who all felt they had the right and need to have free access to the battlefield during the ensuing combat operations. Throughout the Gulf War, correspondents ate, slept, worked, and lived with military units. On D-Day, nearly two hundred reporters, cameramen, and soundmen in the combat media pools were with the Army, Navy, Marine, and Air Force units for the ground phase, crossing into Kuwait. "They required accommodations and logistics support, they got in the way during training, and they constantly threatened operational security."<sup>26</sup> Regardless, they were still treated as a part of the units and supported the best they could in accomplishing their job.

For the operational planner, there are two specific impacts that need to be factored into the planning effort. The first, and most important, is the concept for managing the large contingent of media. In Desert Storm, it became readily apparent that a pool concept would have to be reinstituted to handle the hundreds of media representatives wanting access to the field. Additionally, the Joint Information Bureau had to be established just to control the process. Though the process worked in Desert Storm much of the logistics infrastructure was set up on an ad hoc basis as the media presence grew increasingly larger. Of the many lessons learned from our public affairs efforts in the Gulf, is the need to plan for a large media contingent. Specifically, how planners would go about managing the numbers and locations is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the point to be made here is that large contingents of media,

certain to be a part of every future operation, needs to be planned for ahead of time and integrated with the overall plan.

The second impact, and a related logistics problem, is the need to plan ahead for the process of delivering media products from the field to the distribution points. In Desert Storm, it was a primary concern of the public affairs officers (and media representatives' primary complaint). A less than adequate public affairs technical support infrastructure compounded the problem. Efforts are underway to address the issue, but nonetheless, planners need to carefully integrate the physical and procedural logistics support concerns into their plan if the media is to be effective.

The last issue I want to address is that of preparing the troops how to deal with the media. Part of the solution is a matter of education. Young soldiers need to understand why the media are there and the importance of their presence. Part of the solution is training. Like every other aspect of fighting, "media" should be part of exercises to help prepare the troops for what is likely in battle. The Army has already started doing this and is getting worthwhile feedback. Hopefully, situations like the amphibious landing in Somalia will not occur again, but if they do, at least our soldiers could be prepared to deal with it better. The last part of the solution is a matter of leadership. Commanders and leaders at all levels need to monitor the feedback "message" they send through the reporters to the public. While commanders can not tell the troops what to say, they can make sure they are aware of the perception they present. Additionally, if problems come to light as a result of the feedback received via the media, then commanders need to tackle the problem...not the reporting of it.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Like it or not, the media has changed the face of modern warfare. Revolutionary technological advances provide an instantaneous capability to broadcast live, graphic war images and reports from virtually anywhere in the world to millions of viewers around the globe. That tremendous capability, along with the high degree of battlefield access and the sheer numbers of reporters certain to be present in all future military operations, underscores the magnitude of the media impact facing commanders today. Future planning demands that commanders do more than simply support the media. Commanders need to understand how media on the battlefield evolved, how the media affects their operations, and how they can exploit its presence in their operational planning.

In this paper, I traced the origins of media in combat to highlight the remarkable developments and the increasing interface in military operations. I highlighted the enormous impact the media has made at every level--strategic, operational, and tactical. Operational planners can exploit the power the media brings by integrating the effects of the media presence into operational planning efforts. Key operational planning considerations include:

- First, and foremost, operational planners need to ensure media planning is an integral part of the overall campaign. Make sure the public affairs annex in the OPlans are current and useful.
- Ensure every action planned can stand up to intense public scrutiny and be defended in the face of propaganda. This is particularly applicable to the selection of targets and the selection of weapons used in strikes.
- All efforts must be aimed at keeping the war short and U.S. casualties low.

- Use the media as a medium, when appropriate, for conveying military signals and intentions to the enemy and to the world.
- Exploit the ability of the media to magnify perceptions to enhance military operations such as presence and show-of-force operations.
- Work with the media to actively manage the release of maximum information and minimize the risk to operational security.
- Exploit whatever advantage the media presence provides. Be careful not to manipulate them to achieve the intended objective, but take their reporting into account in planning military operations.
- Utilize all the open source intelligence possible through the media but be especially mindful of deception and propaganda efforts. Counter propaganda efforts, if possible, when they are aimed at U.S. or world public support.
- Maximize the use of real-time damage assessment afforded through live media coverage from the target areas.
- Don't abandon the principle of surprise. Surprise can best be achieved by operating in a manner the enemy does not expect.
- Take into account, the media presence in the field, and factor their logistic support into the operational planning.
- Make media presence a part of routine military exercises.

Properly understood and managed, the media can be a significant force enhancer in all future military operations. Operational planners need to work the media impact into their planning to fully reap the potential benefits.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **CJCS MEDIA-MILITARY RELATIONS PANEL (SIDE PANEL) RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That public affairs planning for military operations be conducted concurrently with operational planning. This can be assured in the majority of cases by implementing the following:

- a) Review all joint planning documents to assure that JCS guidance in public affairs matters is adequate.
- b) When sending implementing orders of Commanders in Chief in the field, direct CINC planners to include considerations of public information aspects.
- c) Inform Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) of an impending military operation at the earliest possible time. This information should come from the Secretary of Defense.
- d) Complete the plan, concurrently being studied, to include a public affairs planning cell in OJCS to help ensure adequate public affairs review of CINC plans.
- e) Insofar as possible and appropriate, institutionalize these steps in written guidance or policy.

2. When it becomes apparent during military operational planning that news media pooling provides the only feasible means of furnishing the media with early access to an operation, planning should provide for the largest possible press pool that is practical and minimize the length of time the pool will be necessary before "full coverage" is feasible.

3. That, in connection with the use of pools, the Joint chiefs of Staff recommend to the Secretary of Defense that he study the matter of whether to use a pre-established and constantly updated accreditation or notification list of correspondents in case of a military operation for which a pool is required or establish a news agency list for use in the same circumstances.

4. That the basic tenet governing media access to military operations should be voluntary compliance by the media with security guidelines or ground rules established and issued by the military. These rules should be as few as possible and worked out during the planning process for each operation. Violations would mean exclusion of the correspondent(s) concerned from further coverage of the operation.

5. Public affairs planning for military operations should include sufficient equipment and qualified military personnel whose function is to assist correspondents in covering the operation adequately.

6. Planners should carefully consider media communications requirements to assure to earliest feasible availability. However, these communications must not interfere with combat and combat support operations. If necessary and feasible, plans should include communications facilities dedicated to news media.

7. Planning factors should include provisions for intra- and inter-theater transportation support of the media.

8. To improve media-military understanding and cooperation:

- a) CJCS should recommend to the Secretary of Defense that a program be undertaken by the ASD(PA) for top military public affairs representatives to meet with news organization leadership, to include meetings with individual news organizations, on a reasonably regular basis to discuss mutual operations and exercises. This program should begin as soon as possible.
- b) Enlarge programs already underway to improve military understanding of the media via public affairs instruction in service schools and colleges, to include media participation when possible.
- c) Seek improved media understanding of the military through visits by commanders and line officers to new organizations.
- d) CJCS should recommend that the Secretary of Defense host at an early date a working meeting with representatives of the broadcast news media to explore the special problems of ensuring military security when and if there is a real time or a near real time news media audio-visual coverage of a battlefield and, if special problems exist, how they can best be dealt with consistent with the basic principle.

## **APPENDIX II**

### **REVIEW OF THE PANAMA POOL DEPLOYMENT (HOFFMAN REPORT) RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. The Secretary of Defense should issue a policy directive, to be circulated throughout the Department and the Armed services, stating explicitly his official sponsorship of the media pool and requiring full support for it. That policy statement should make it clear to all that the pool must be given every assistance to report combat by U.S. troops from the start of the operations.**
- 2. All operational plans drafted by the joint staff must have an annex spelling out measures to assure that the pool will move with the lead elements of U.S. forces and cover the earliest stages of operations. The principle should be incorporated in overall public affairs plans.**
- 3. A Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs should closely monitor development of operation-related public affairs plans to assure they fulfill all requirements for pool coverage. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs should review all such plans. In advance of military actions those plans should be briefed to the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff along with the operation plans.**
- 4. In a runup to a military operation, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff should send out a message ordering all commanders to give full cooperation to the media pool and its escorts. This requirement should be spelled out unambiguously and should reach down through all echelons in the chain of command. Such a message should make clear that necessary resources, such as helicopters, ground vehicles, communications, etc.; must be earmarked specifically for pool use, that the pool must have ready access to the earliest action and that the safety of the pool must not be used as a reason to keep the pool from action.**
- 5. The ASD(PA) must be prepared to weight in aggressively with the Secretary of Defense and the JCS Chairman when necessary to overcome any secrecy or other obstacles blocking prompt deployment of the pool to the scene of action.**
- 6. After the pool has been deployed, the ASD(PA) must be kept informed in a timely fashion of any hitches that may arise. He must be prepared to act immediately, to contact the JCS Chairman, the joint staff director of operations and other senior officers who can serve to break through any obstacles to the pool. The ASD(PA) should call on the Defense Secretary for help as needed.**
- 7. The ASD(PA) should study the proposal by several of the Panama poolers that future pools deploy in two sections. The first section would be very small and include only reporters and photographers. The second section, coming later, would bring in supporting gear, such as satellite uplink equipment.**



8. The national media pool should never again be herded as a single unwieldy unit. It should be broken up after arriving at the scene of action to cover a wider spectrum of the story and then be reassembled periodically to share the reporting results.

9. The pool should be exercised at least once during each quarterly rotation with airborne and other types of military units most likely to be sent on emergency combat operations.

10. During deployments, there should be regular briefings for pool newsman and newswomen by senior operations officers so the poolers will have an up-to-date and complete overview of the progress of an operation they are covering.

11. There is an urgent need for restructuring of the organization which has the responsibility for handling pool reports sent to the Pentagon for processing distribution. The ASD(PA) must assure that there is adequate staffing and enough essential equipment to handle the task. The director of plans, so long as he has this responsibility, should clearly assign contingency duties among his staff to ensure timely handling of reports from the pool. Staffers from the Administration Office, Community Relations and other divisions of ASD(PA) should be mobilized to help in such a task as needed.

12. The ASD(PA) should give serious consideration to a suggestion by some of the pool members to create a new pool slot for an editor who would come to the Pentagon during a deployment to lend professional journalism help to the staff officers handling pool reports. Such a pool editor could edit copy, questions content where indicated and help expediate the distribution of the reports.

13. The pool escorting system needs overhaul as well. There is no logical reason for the Washington-based escorts to be drawn from the top of the ASD(PA) Plans division. The head of that division should remain in Washington to oversee getting out the pool products.

14. The ASD(PA) should close a major gap in the pool system by requiring all pool participant organizations—whether print, still photo, TV or radio—to share all pool products with all elements of the news industry. Pool participants must understand they represent the entire industry.

15. There is merit in a suggestion by one of the pool photographers that participating news organizations share the cost of the equipment, such as portable dark room and a negative transmitter, which could be stored at Andrews AFB for ready access in a deployment. Other equipment essential for a smooth transmission of pool products, such as satellite up-link gear, might also be acquired and stored in the same manner.

16. All pool-assigned reporters and photographers, not only bureau chiefs, should attend quarterly Pentagon sessions where problems can be discussed and rules and responsibilities underscored.

17. Public Affairs Officers from unified commands should meet periodically with pool assigned reporters and photographers with whom they might have to work in some future crises.

### APPENDIX III

#### Statement of DoD Principles for News Media Coverage of DoD Operations

*Note: These principles were drafted by news media representatives and accepted almost verbatim by the DoD. Though the media desired a tenth principle, denying the military requirement of security review, it was rejected by the DoD.*

1. Open and independent reporting will be the principle means of coverage of all U.S. military operations.
2. Pools are not to serve as the standard means of covering U.S. military operations. Pools may sometimes provide the only feasible means of early access to a military operation. Pools should be as large as possible and disbanded at the earliest opportunity – within 24-36 hours when possible. The arrival of early access pools will not cancel the principle of independent coverage for journalists already in the area.
3. Even under conditions of open coverage, pools may be appropriate for special events, such as those at extremely remote locations or where space is limited.
4. Journalists in a combat zone will be credentialed by the U.S. military and will be required to abide by a clear set of military security ground rules that protect U.S. forces and their operations. Violations of the ground rules can result in suspension credential and expulsion from the combat zone for the journalist involved. News organizations will make their best efforts to assign experienced journalists to combat operations and to make them familiar with U.S. military operations.
5. Journalists will be provided access to all major military units. Special operations restrictions may limit access in some cases.
6. Military public affairs officers should act as liaisons but should not interfere with the reporting process.
7. Under conditions of open coverage, field commanders should be instructed to permit journalists to ride on military vehicles and aircraft when feasible. The military will be responsible for the transportation of pools.
8. Consistent with its capabilities, the military will provide public affairs officers with the facilities to enable timely, secure, compatible transmission of pool material and will make these facilities available whenever possible for filing independent coverage. In cases when government facilities are unavailable, journalists will, as always, file by any other means available. The military will not ban communications systems operated by news organizations, but electronic operations security in battlefield situations may require limited restrictions on the use of such systems.
9. These principles will apply as well to the operations of the standing DoD National Media Pool system.

## **APPENDIX IV**

### **Principles of Information**

It is the policy of the Department of Defense to make available timely and accurate information so that the public, congress, and the news media may assess and understand the facts about national security and defense strategy. Requests for information from organizations and private citizens will be answered in a timely manner. In carrying out this policy, the following principles of information will apply:

1. Information will be made fully and readily available, consistent with statutory requirements, unless its release is precluded by current and valid security classification. The provisions of the Freedom of Information Act will be supported in both letter and spirit.

2. A free flow of general and military information will be made available, without censorship or propaganda, to the men and women of the Armed Forces and their dependents.

3. Information will not be classified or otherwise withheld to protect the government from criticism or embarrassment.

4. Information will be withheld only when disclosure would adversely affect national security or threaten the safety or privacy of the men and women of the Armed Forces.

5. The Department's objection to provide the public with information on its major programs may require detailed public affairs planning and coordination within the Department and with other government agencies. The sole purpose of such activity is to expedite the flow of information to the public: propaganda has no place in the defense public affairs programs.

## **APPENDIX V**

### **Operation Desert Storm Media Ground Rules**

The following information should not be reported, because its publication or broadcast could jeopardize operations and endanger lives:

1. For U.S. or coalition unit, specific numerical information on troop strength, aircraft, weapon systems, on-hand equipment, or supplies such as artillery, tanks, radars, missiles, trucks, water, including amounts of ammunition or fuel moved by support units or on hand in combat units. Unit size may be described in general terms such as "company-size," "multibattalion," "multidivision," "naval task force," and "carrier battle group." Number and amount of supplies may be described in general terms such as "large," "small," or "many."
2. Any information that reveals details of force plans, operations or strikes, including postponed or canceled operations.
3. Information, photography or imagery that would reveal the specific location of military forces or show the level of security at military installations or encampments. Locations may be described as follows: all navy embark stories can identify the ship upon which embarked as a dateline and will state that the report is coming from the "Persian Gulf," "Red Sea," or "North Arabian Sea." Stories written in Saudi Arabia may be datelined, "Eastern Saudi Arabia," "Near the Kuwaiti border," and so on. For specific countries outside Saudi Arabia, stories will state that the report is coming from the Persian Gulf region unless that country has acknowledged its participation.
4. Rules of engagement details.
5. Information on intelligence collection activities, including targets, methods and results.
6. During an operation, specific information on friendly force troop movements, tactical deployments, and dispositions that would jeopardize operational security and lives. This would include unit designations, names of operations and size of friendly forces involved, until released by USCENTCOM.
7. Identification of mission aircraft points of origin, other than as land or carrier based.
8. Information on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of enemy camouflage, cover, deception, targeting, direct or indirect fire, intelligence collection or security measures.
9. Specific identifying information on missing or downed aircraft or ships while search and rescue operations are planned or underway.

10. Special operations' forces methods, unique equipment, or tactics.

11. Specific operating methods and tactics, such as air operations angles of attack or speeds, or naval tactics or evasive maneuvers. General terms such as "low" or "fast" may be used.

12. Information on operational or support vulnerabilities that could be used against U.S. forces, such as details of major battle damage or major personnel losses of specific U.S. or coalition units, until that information no longer provides tactical advantage to the enemy and is, therefore, released by USCENCOM. Damage and casualties may be described as "light," "moderate" or "heavy."

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